Re: A Dog Under the Pool Cover, a Missing Fence, and a Very Quiet Donal Collins

From: [REDACTED]
To: Joshua Powell
Date: Sunday, February 15, 2026 at 10:48 PM

A neighbor recently told me about a conversation he had with Williams early on in the Winery/Wedding venue controversy, as he tried to explain why the neighbors were so upset by the proposal. Williams' response was, "I don't give a fuck about my neighbors."

Sent from the all new AOL app for iOS

On Sunday, February 15, 2026, 6:03 PM, Joshua Powell <josh@thepowellhousepress.com> wrote:

ALL EMAILS ARE PUBLIC AND CAN BE SHARED. EMAILS ARE BLINDED FOR READER'S PRIVACY

Good evening,

Across the pond in Old Chatham stood the Mickles' house (it's still there, the Mickles are not). Before it was theirs, it belonged to Albert Callan, back before he married Ginny. Both Peg Mickle and Albert were master gardeners, and the Mickles' place showed it. Come spring, Peg's yard erupted into a sea of yellow daffodils, the kind of display that made you look.

Peg was content to garden, be friendly, and keep to herself about most things. Her constant companion was her dog, a medium-sized spaniel of some sort, always at her heels. I think his name was Barky.

One day Barkie went missing. We all walked around calling for him. No luck. Winter came and went.

When the snow finally melted that spring, they found him under the pool cover. True story.

There were only two inground pools in the village in those days: the Mickles' and the Marks'. Ira Marks was always careful to protect everyone. Their pool was private, tucked back in the woods down a steep hill, fenced off as a matter of course. Can't be sure if Ira did it because it was the law back then. But if you knew him — I did, up until the day he died — you knew him to be a remarkable man. Always cared about people's safety and the village. Just one of the many reasons I adored him.

Again, I don't know what the rules were back then, but a fence certainly would have changed the character of the Mickles' home. And of course, this was a time when none of us wore helmets skiing or biking, when we played with fireworks and lawn darts. There was no malice on Mrs. Mickle's part. Things were simply different. Sometimes I think it's a wonder any of us kids survived, but I wouldn't trade it for this namby-pamby new suburban world order.

The point is this: the state eventually came to recognize that pools pose serious safety risks. And it did something about it. Not with a guideline. Not with a suggestion. With a statewide law.

That law is the New York State Uniform Fire Prevention and Building Code, which adopts the Residential Code of New York State. Under Section AG106, Appendix G, covering swimming pools, spas, and hot tubs, the requirements are unambiguous: a barrier of at least 48 inches in height must surround all outdoor inground pools. Gates must be self-closing and self-latching. The barrier must resist climbing. And New York General

Business Law § 399-ff goes further, specifically requiring residential pool owners to maintain proper barriers.

The Town of Chatham's own zoning code, Chapter 180, reinforces all of it. Private swimming pools must be enclosed by a fence and gates in accordance with the state code. The only way around this requirement is a waiver from the Zoning Board of Appeals. Not a unilateral decision by the property owner. Building permits are required for any pool capable of holding two feet or more of water, and for fences.

Why do these laws exist? For one of the main tenets of public health: prevention. To protect people, pets, and wildlife from accidental injury and death.

Which brings me to Bashford Road, and the claims Dr. Williams has made about his vast knowledge of law and regulation. These are his words, not mine: *"With regard to compliance, this is an area I am extremely familiar with. I have founded, managed, and operated a fully accredited ambulatory surgery center and surgical practice more than 30 years, so compliance—state, federal, and regulatory—is something I navigate every single day."*

At work maybe, but not at 509 Bashford Road.

The Williams have a lovely pool, but there's no fence. I get it that it interrupts the aesthetics. I also get that its part of living in a community - you follow the law for the public's safety.

So, I must wonder: Does Dr. Williams know about the law? He should. Knowledge of fencing requirements is part and parcel of getting a permit to build a pool.

Here's the thing. If this simple, black-letter requirement, one designed to protect the public's health and safety, gets tossed aside for the sake of the "look" someone wants, it raises a much larger question: How trustworthy can such a person be to follow the regulations governing pollution from a commercial crop grown adjacent to protected wetlands?

Is this just another example of "I can do whatever I want, and I don't take no for an answer," the very words we heard on Dr. Williams' own podcast?

I wonder why the town hasn't said a word about this? It's plain as day on recent satellite footage. No fence.

I've checked the ZBA minutes and agendas going back to 2010, before there was even a pool on the property to see if there was a variance applied for or received. There is nothing.

I thought maybe something was misfiled, so I pulled the actual Town Board meeting minutes. Maybe, just maybe, it was buried there. Nothing.

But here's what is interesting. As I read through the Chatham Town Board meeting minutes I noticed that Supervisor Donal Collins reports on his county-level interactions at every single Town Board meeting, in a standing section of the minutes called "Town & County." Every meeting. Since he took office.

Now, you'd think a dustup like 509 Bashford Road, a.k.a. the Fox Hill Vineyard, a matter that went before the County Board of Supervisors, impacting the Town of Chatham, would merit at least a mention to the Town Board from Mr. Collins. A sentence. A footnote.

But there's nothing.

Again, you don't have to trust me. Read it for yourself on the town website.

More to come. See you Wednesday on Substack.

JDP

PS - I took the liberty of creating a file of all the PDFs I've been reviewing. Click here to read the ZBA minutes. Click here to read the Chatham Town Board Meetings.

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